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TAGS: ELAB, PINT, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH TRADE UNIONS DENOUNCE FRANCO-SOVIET
GAS DEAL

REFERENCE: PARIS 2577

1. SUMMARY.
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CGT, VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE FRENCH
TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS CONDEMNED THE RECENTLY-CONCLUDED
(REFTEL) FRANCO-SOVIET GAS DEAL. USING TERMS SUCH AS
"ILL-ADVISED", "INOPPORTUNE", AND "OUT-OF-STEP WITH FRENCH
OPINION", "A STAB IN THE BACK FOR POLISH TRADE UNIONISTS",
FRENCH TRADE UNION LEADERS TOOK GOVERNMENT TO TASK FOR
THE "CLANDESTINE" CONCLUSION OF A DEAL WHICH, IN THE VIEW
OF SOME, MIGHT HAVE SERVED AS A POTENTIAL PRESSURE POINT
TO WIN CONCESSIONS FOR POLISH WORKERS. GOVERNMENT'S SOLE
TRADE UNION DEFENDER IN THIS CASE IS THE COMMUNIST-
CONTROLLED CGT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FRANCO-SOVIET GAS DEAL (REFTEL) HAS BEEN DENOUNCED
NOT ONLY BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION BUT ALSO BY MOST
FRENCH TRADE UNIONS, AT LEAST ONE OF WHICH HAS BEEN
GENERALLY CONSIDERED A CLOSE ALLY OF THE MAUROY GOVERNMENT

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UNCLASSIFIED

STATE

82 7897814 SUR

PAGE 002
TOR: 300053Z JAN 82

NC 7897814

3. THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED FRENCH CONFEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC LABOR (CFDT) IN THE PERSON OF ASST. SECRETARY GENERAL JACQUES CHEREQUE TOOK EXCEPTION IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS: QUOTE THE CFDT SIGNALS ITS DISAGREEMENT WITH THE DECISION, THE IMPLICATIONS OF WHICH -- PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS -- REQUIRED A SERIOUS CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND THE PARTIES CONCERNED. WITHOUT A DOUBT, THIS ACTION WEAKENS THE IMPACT OF THE RESPONSE OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND ITS EUROPEAN PARTNERS WITH REGARD TO THE SITUATION IN POLAND AND THE STRATEGY OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE CFDT'S FEDERATION OF GAS AND ELECTRICITY WORKERS LIKewise DENOUNCED THE MANNER AND TIMING OF THE SIGNATURE OF THE CONTRACT. THE FEDERATION REGRETTED THE "SEMI-CLANDESTINE" MANNER IN WHICH THE DEAL HAD BEEN CONCLUDED -- PARTICULARLY SINCE THE FEDERATION HAD INTENDED TO LAUNCH A TRADE UNION DEBATE ON THE CONTRACT WHICH IT RECOGNIZED HAD POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE. THE FEDERATION FELT THAT THE SIGNATURE OF THE CONTRACT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DELAYED AS A MEANS OF BRINGING PRESSURE FOR THE RESTORATION OF FREEDOM IN POLAND. FOLLOWING UP ON THE FOREGOING, CFDT SECRETARY GENERAL MAIRE APPEARING ON FRENCH TELEVISION JANUARY 25, SAID THAT THE CONTRACT WAS ILL-ADVISED BECAUSE IT PLACED FRANCE IN A DEPENDENT POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE USSR. WITHIN 10 YEARS FRANCE WOULD DEPEND ON THIS SOURCE FOR 40 OF ITS GAS, SAID MAIRE. FOR MAIRE IT WAS A POLITICAL RATHER THAN AN ECONOMIC DECISION, COMING AS IT DID AT A MOMENT WHEN THE POLISH WORKING CLASS IS UNDER THE REPRESSION OF GENERAL JARUZELSKI. MAIRE SAID THAT, FOR TRADE UNIONISTS, THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE "HEAD AND BRAIN" OF THE POLISH CRISIS IS THE SOVIET UNION. FOR MAIRE THERE IS A "GAP" SEPARATING THIS DECISION FROM FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION, WHICH REMAINS MOBILIZED ON THE QUESTION OF POLAND.

4. FORCE OUVRIERE SECRETARY GENERAL ANDRE BERGERON SAID: "I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE ACCORD SHOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNED IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. DECIDEDLY, THE VEIL OF FORGETFULNESS IS IN THE PROCESS OF FALLING OVER POLAND".

5. THE CFTC IN A COMMUNIQUE DATED JANUARY 25 SAID THAT

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

STATE

82 7897814 SUR

PAGE 003
TOR: 300053Z JAN 82

NC 7897814

THE SIGNATURE OF THE CONTRACT COMES AT A MOMENT WHICH MAKES A MOCKERY OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS AS WELL AS THE FORTHCOMING MADRID CONFERENCE ON THE HELSINKI TREATY AND HUMAN RIGHTS. THE CFTD EXPRESSED ITS PROFOUND BITTERNESS AT THE FACT THAT CONSIDERATIONS OF "BUSINESS" CONTINUE TO TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL CONDUCT, AND THAT FRANCE -- LIKE OTHER EEC COUNTRIES -- IS ABDICATING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN SO FUNDAMENTAL AN AREA. THE CFTC CALLED ON ALL WORKERS TO PURSUE WITH INCREASED VIGOR THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE POLISH WORKERS.

6. THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF SUPERVISORY AND TECHNICAL WORKERS (CGC) CHARACTERIZED THE ACCORD AS "A VERITABLE STAB IN THE BACK FOR POLISH TRADE UNIONISTS".

7. THE CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (CSL), CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE PATRONAT, FOUND THE CONTRACT "UNWELCOME FROM BOTH AN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW." THE CSL FELT THAT THE CONTRACT "INCREASED FRANCE'S DEPENDENCE AND DEPRIVED IT IN PART

OF ITS ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE POLISH PEOPLE". FINALLY, THE CSL WONDERED WHAT INTEREST PROMPTED PRESIDENT MITTERRAND TO MAKE SUCH AN ACCORD.

8. STILL OUT OF STEP WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, THE CGT APPROVED THE FRANCO-SOVIET DEAL AS NECESSARY FOR FRANCE AND IN LINE WITH ITS OWN POLICY OF MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS ECONOMIC COOPERATION, FREE FROM THE TAIN OF COLONIALISM OR IMPERIALISM. SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE CGT'S ENERGY FEDERATION, SECRETARY GENERAL FRANCOIS DUTHEIL SAID THAT "THE WORKERS WILL NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE DEFLECTED FROM THEIR PURPOSE BY VILE POLITICAL MANEUVRES."

9. SUMMING UP FOR THE DEFENSE, HUMANITE FOR JANUARY 26, DISMISSED THE NEAR-UNANIMOUS TRADE UNION DENUNCIATION OF THE DEAL AS THE WORK OF MIS-GUIDED LEADERS WHO HAD BOUGHT THE LINE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE. HUMANITE CLOSED ITS CASE WITH A REMINDER THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND JOBS

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

STATE

82 7897814 SUR

PAGE 004

NC 7897814

TOR: 300053Z JAN 82

FOR FRENCHMEN DEPENDED ON THE DEAL.

GALBRAITH

END OF MESSAGE

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